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ABSTRACT

Leisure is a multi-faceted concept, the definition of which varies according to the presuppositions of the individual. It may be conceived of as a term pertaining to a single individual or a whole society. Leisure is commonly defined in terms of time, activities, or state of mind. The way in which leisure is viewed significantly affects the planning and formation of recreation programs. When leisure is defined as "time" or "activities," program planning lacks the specific needs of individuals. Leisure defined as "state of mind" brings planning to the level of individual needs, but the dynamics of how leisure activities affect individuals is not present. Therefore, program planning remains frustrating. This article examines some common characteristics of leisure within each individual. With these commonalities, the utilization of leisure as it pertains to the individual gives guidelines to predict needs, behaviors, perceptions, or motivations in the services offered. With this new perspective, planning, organizing, and evaluating leisure programs should become more effective for all administrators and participants. (Author/AMH)

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UNDERSTANDING THE FUNCTION OF LEISURE WITHIN AN INDIVIDUAL

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Abstract

Leisure is a multi-faceted concept, the definition of which varies according to the presuppositions of the individual. It may be conceived of as a term pertaining to a single individual or a whole society. The common approaches to define leisure are as time, activities, or state of mind.

The way in which we view leisure signficantly affects the planning and formation of recreation programs. Defining leisure as 'time' or 'activities' are such broad concepts, program planning would lack specific needs of each individual. Leisure as 'state of mind' brings planning to the level of the individual's needs, however, the dynamics of how leisure activities affect individuals is not present. Therefore, program planning remains frustrating.

This article examines some common characteristics regarding leisure within each individual. With these commonalities, the utilization of leisure as it pertains to the individual gives guidelines to predict needs, behaviors, perceptions, or motivations in the services offered. With this new perspective, planning, organizing and evaluating of leisure programs should become more effective for all administrators and participants.

UNDERSTANDING THE FUNCTION OF LEISURE WITHIN AN INDIVIDUAL

In a culture where unemployment, underemployment, retirement and affluent leisure-time lifestyles are becoming commonplace, leisure is a misunderstood concept. As an individual who is wrestling with the use of leisure time, or a recreation planner, the dynamics of this span of time must be clearly understood. In the process of educating and training all age groups to improve their quality of life, the importance of leisure must be part of that curriculum.

Utilizing the concept of leisure in the individual's life or planning a recreation program has been futile, when we attempt to define leisure as time, activity, place, as well as a state of mind. However, if the dynamics of leisure are analyzed only as it pertains to the individual, some insights are learned that help give new perspective into the development of more effective programs.

Leisure as it relates to an individual is a perception of life which causes us to become increasingly more able to choose an activity which is wholesome. This definition is more useful with the following assumptions. First, the perception of one's life can only be determined by the individual himself. Second, every incident makes an impact upon the current condition of an individual. It includes the turbulence of work, boredom, heartbreak, tragedy, and the routines of life; and adjustments

to new settings, like marriage, family, retirement, war, and inflation. Likewise, it also includes the refreshment of pleasure, recreation, knowledge, aesthetics, intimate relationships, and social interactions. In other words, an individual had developed to his present state because he had experienced situations which made impacts upon his life. Third, the main indicators of leisure within an individual are goals, a continual process and development (growth), maturity and balance. These elements reveal the effectiveness as well as efficiency of leisure within a person.

Goals are identified as one of the most powerful motivating forces known to man, for they provide not only the power to accomplish a task, but give the direction and point of concentration for leisure activities to avoid distractions. They, likewise, provide the purpose and standard for measurement by which to determine his current condition. The fact that goals have been set does not make a person experience a state of leisure, but the process of continually advancing the person toward the goal is significant.

The factor of continual process and development within the state of being is equal in importance to goals regarding leisure. Growth is divided into process and development to signify the learning of new knowledge (process) as different from the

deepening of the new knowledge with experience (development). Both elements are essential for meaningful growth. When a person is growing, he is encouraging an environment for the interaction within the whole being - the physical, mental, spiritual, social, and intellectual realms of life. Brightbill (1961) believes that the pathway towards goals is just as meaningful as the goal itself, bringing satisfaction and fulfillment. This awareness of growing or meeting objectives creates a positive attitude and motivation. John Kalahar (1975) described leisure activity as self-actualizing, rewarding, fulfilling and both the means and the end.

Maturity in the state of being is the stabilizing factor the individual. It is the ability to take into account all external factors and the new progress toward life's goals, in light of priorities, and make a decision for action. The ability to implement and follow through on the decision is also part of maturity. Maturation is unique from growth in that it deals primarily with the old experiences of the individual that are inherent and formulates or integrates them with new knowledge into the wholeness of the person. Where growth (process and development) deals with one area of life, maturity assimilates it into the whole being. It involves the full relationship of all parts of the person, before, during and after growth occurs. Brightbill (1961) wrote that man is a whole being. His mind,

spirit and body must work in harmony. Thus, the inclusion of these indicators implies the significance of holistic leisure- that ability to develop a wholesome and complete lifestyle.

The remaining indicator of leisure within the individual is balance. This element stresses the natural tendency for a person to seek to meet all of his needs. There are physical, social, spiritual, intellectual, and psychological needs demanding to be met. If certain areas are not fulfilled, imbalance occurs. Unfulfilled life causes turmoil and frustration. The whole being begins to experience the stress as a result of imbalance. Even the medical profession is respelling disease as dis-ease to emphasize external stresses which physically affects man. It is the responsibility of each individual to remain in a state of leisure. Goals, growth, and maturity play an important part of the being, yet they are not immediate focal points in the person's mind. On the other hand, balance is a barometer of deficiency or excess in a man that continually suggests an addition, adjustment, or elimination within the individual.

Within that individual's perception of himself, the assumption is that a variety of components are contained within leisure. The terms, state of mind (Neulinger, 1974), search for identity (Klapp, 1969), a mental or spiritual attitude (Dahl, 1972, Pieper, 1952), a sense of enjoyment and freedom, and

capacity of self-realization and self-expression (Smith, 1973), and a process of choice and a refinement (Dumazedier, 1967), present aspects of leisure, but none of them gives the completeness necessary to be utilized in planning, organizing or evaluating one's own life.

There are two additional concepts used to define leisure, both of which are confusing to understanding the role of leisure. These are time and the issues of non-work. Several authors (Gist and Fava, 1964, Meyersohn, 1972) describe leisure as unobligated time. They are referring to that span of time, the use of which is not responsible to a job, family, and other daily tasks. While this may at first appear to be acceptable, an analysis discloses some implications which do not fit. First, it implies that there is such time which contains little or no obligations - an idea that is difficult to comprehend since even at the most unproductive moment of life, one is not free from the responsibilities of one's self (eating, exercising, sleeping, etc.).

The second implication of leisure as non-obligated time is that it does not, in itself, contain obligations and therefore it implies a low priority in life. If that which is unobligated cannot have obligations, then the implication is that time used for leisure carries the connotations of waste. Third, when leisure is considered as self-perceived, the aspect of time

becomes even less significant. There are no ideal spans of time, or special hours, days or weeks particularly set aside for leisure, for a state of being is in a process which each moment is utilized to a maximum for the full development of the individual. But most significantly, leisure time activities is becoming a higher priority in everyone's life to relieve the stresses which surround them. The confusion lying in the planning of a top priority activity is of so great an importance, that defining as unobligated, is illogical.

Another element that is commonly used in the definition of leisure, is non-work or renewal in preparation for work. These concepts arise out of the society's economic argument that time that is not productive in monetary value, is wasted time unless used for preparation for work. But, leisure is not an anti-thesis of an occupation, being instead both work and non-work (Berger, 1963). Leisure, as a state of being, exists on a higher plane in one's life than a job. Work in one's occupation can be accomplished whether the person is balanced or imbalanced, but leisure cannot exist under such unsettled conditions. Placing this aspect (non-work) within the understanding of leisure, would put serious limitations upon the concept. One may argue that leisure is, in fact, a prerequisite for work. For, the state of leisure is a prerequisite for an productive occupation, in that it is a state of mind that

produces effectiveness and efficiency (Dahl, 1972).

By placing the various components of a state of being into a model (Figure 1), one can see the interrelationship between attitudes, needs, goals and resources in the process of leisure. Beginning with a self-perceived state of being, one can follow the dynamics of our perceptions to reach the final stage of this process as recreation. Recreation, within the individual, is the result of an experience which contributes to a wholesome condition of the person. It is important to note that professionals do not develop a program which is recreation, but the individuals participate in activities anticipating the result to be recreation.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The implication of leisure's definition and model is that all programs can be planned, organized, implemented and evaluated in relation to the wholeness of man. These considerations should include:

1. Program planning should attempt to meet most of the needs of most of people, most of the time.
2. Programs should be designed to include various levels of knowledge and skill.
3. Diversity of activities should be offered to cover in the

attempt to meet the needs of all individuals.

4. Even though a program is specifically designed for a particular need (e.g. physical fitness), consideration of other needs should be included so that it may produce a more fulfilling experience to each participant.
5. Attitudes, goals and priorities may determine the extent of the person's participation. The education regarding the importance of the leisure activity is necessary to attract new participants and encourage repeated participation.
6. Each individual is continually evaluating the activity based on the level of satisfaction being experienced.
7. The psychographics of participants become important in developing ideas of expansion or redirection of programs.
8. Since people progress at the various levels of understanding and skill, the planning and administration of recreation programs is an ongoing dynamic process.
9. Understanding all of the possible factors involved in a recreational experience, new approaches to programs, formats, teaching techniques, scheduling, and marketing should be planned and implemented.
10. The image of the total program, the attitude of the recreation program staff is important to the perception of the experience by the participant, and should be included in the planning and administration of the

programs.

11. The recreational effect of activities is determined by the evaluation after the program, based upon the leisure model.

In educating a society regarding the utilization of leisure, the material of this article provides an understanding of how young people can live a more efficienct and effective life, and explain to adults what they have been attempting throughout the years. As people go face the various seasons of life, this information will provide a base for decisions that will maintain a balanced lifestyle.

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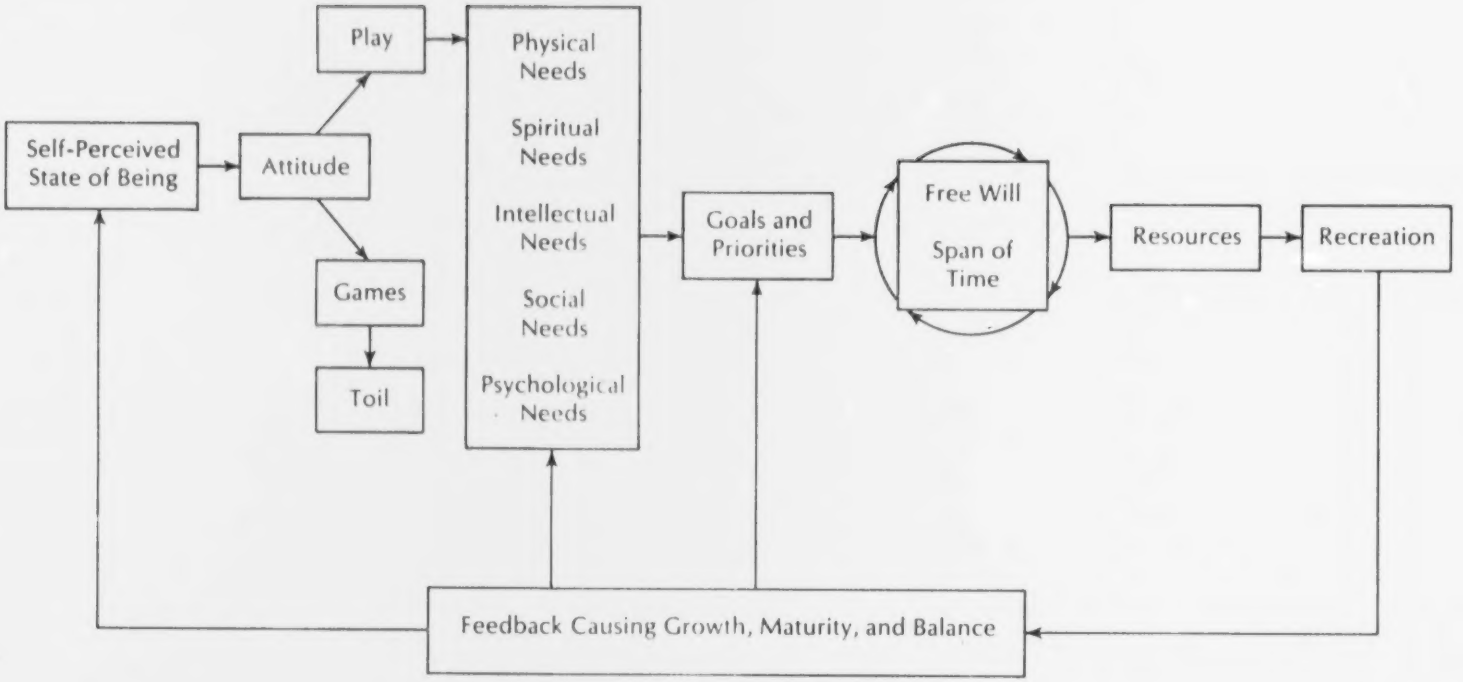
Figure Caption

Figure 1. Model of the interrelationship of components of an individual in the state of leisure.


Play
Physical Needs
Spiritual Needs
Intellectual Needs
Social Needs
Psychological Needs
Self-Perceived State of Being
Attitude
Games
Toil
Goals and Priorities
Free Will
Span of Time
Resources
Recreation
Feedback Causing Growth, Maturity, and Balance